

Gonzales, and Ron Hollingshead, the Colorado Drug Investigators Association continues to unite into one organization all Colorado peace officers and individuals committed to protecting the State from all drug-related crime. This organization provides comprehensive counternarcotics training for all members in all aspects of drug enforcement and continues to educate and recommend legislation favorable to effective drug enforcement in Colorado. It recognizes the critical importance of information exchange and actively facilitates this communication between members of the association on the movements of drug violators and new and innovative techniques used by either the criminals or law enforcement.

In addition, the Colorado Drug Investigators Association, through cultural, legislative, political, fraternal, educational, charitable, welfare and social activities, fosters an atmosphere of cooperation and information sharing among all law enforcement in Colorado, private industry and the public. I believe the CDIA represents a valuable tool in the fight against drug-related crime and express my appreciation to all association members for their commitment to the safety and security for the citizens of Colorado.

LABOR DAY

Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, Labor Day is our opportunity to celebrate the millions of American workers who have given, and continue to give, so much of themselves to make our Nation great. I am happy to have had the opportunity to celebrate this Labor Day in Racine, WV, with many old friends. Today, on the holiday especially devoted to the social and economic achievements of the American workforce. I would like to thank all of the miners, teachers, nurses, service technicians, firefighters, police, repairmen, and all those who dedicate their lives to making their communities and their country a better place. As summer is winding down and children are preparing to go back to school, we should all take a moment to appreciate what working Americans do for us.

Honest, hard-working people, with the core American values of faith and family, are what make West Virginia such a wonderful place to live and call home. Miners work long shifts, miles under the ground, often in tight spaces with frigid water up to their knees, to get the coal that provides 50 percent of our Nation's electricity. Yet people rarely think of that when they flip on the light switch. Teachers spend much of their own personal time preparing lesson plans and finding creative ways to teach our next generation. They always go above and beyond the call of duty for their students. Those in public service work day in and day out to get Social Security checks processed and in the mail on time, to manage tax returns, or to deliver basic health services to our citizens. I applaud each and every one of these Americans.

I am glad Congress succeeded, finally, this year in raising the minimum wage to \$6.55, to help our working families. Increasing the minimum wage so it is a living wage is something I have advocated since 1998, and now all of our workers will get the increase they need and deserve to help make ends meet in this struggling economy. This Labor Day I am especially aware of the need to change the direction of our country and that has to start with turning around our economy. It is unfair for hard-working Americans to have to deal with stagnant wages and rising costs for gas, food, and health care with no help. The minimum wage will continue to rise until it reaches \$7.25 in 2009.

These workers are the heart and soul of West Virginia. Opportunities do not come easily to them. They work hard every day to get the things they need for their families—gas, school supplies, and maybe new sneakers or a pair of jeans for the next school year. Before the rise of unions, we did not enjoy a 40-hour work week, the benefits of Social Security, or the right to organize. But West Virginians always fought for the American dream. They have a high regard for quality and strive for excellence in everything that they do. In an unfortunate Forbes survey, West Virginia was listed as one of the least desirable states in which to do business. But that is only because some companies do not yet know the men and women that make up West Virginia's workforce; they do not realize that West Virginia's future and potential is about more than just coal. They do not see the small business owners, the nurses and doctors, the educators, the entrepreneurs, the manufacturers, and artists who keep our State moving and make it so special. They must not have heard that companies from all over the world such as DuPont, Union Carbide, and Phone Poulenc have put plants in West Virginia and tapped into our dedicated work force. Northrop Grumman, MPL Corporation, Orrick, Herrington, and Sutcliffe, that's the real West Virginia—with a bright future fueled by all its abundant resources, the most precious of which are the men and women of our workforce. Our Toyota plant is the fastest growing plant in the history of Toyota Motor Company. It has been named the plant with the most productive workers in all of North America 5 years in a row. This is a testament to West Virginia employees' unmatched work ethic.

As we celebrate Labor Day, we need to remember that it is the commitment and diligence of our workers that makes us great. We as West Virginians are fighters, always have been, always will be, but even fighters need a day off. West Virginians have earned a day of rest.

TRIBUTE TO BRENDAN O'CONNOR

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, as we continue to debate national strategy

and the way ahead in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is one thing that is not debatable, and that is the courage and valor of our troops. Today, I wish to honor one of those brave troops, MSgt Brendan O'Connor, a medic in the Special Forces of the U.S. Army.

Master Sergeant O'Connor distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in action during a fierce battle in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, when his small detachment engaged an estimated 200 Taliban fighters on June 24, 2006. For his heroism, Master Sergeant O'Connor, who held the rank of sergeant first class at the time of the battle, was honored with the Nation's second highest award for valor, the Distinguished Service Cross.

After awarding the Distinguished Service Cross to Brendan, ADM Eric Olson, the head of U.S. Special Operations Command, hailed the contributions of the Army's Special Forces and said, "Master Sergeant Brendan O'Connor exemplifies the spirit of these warriors."

Leading a quick reaction force during a mission against Taliban leaders, Master Sergeant O'Connor and his team found themselves outnumbered and surrounded by hundreds of Taliban fighters in one of the most hotly contested areas of Afghanistan. After calmly maneuvering his force through enemy Taliban positions, Master Sergeant O'Connor crawled over 150 yards alone through enemy machine-gun fire across an open field to rescue two wounded comrades. Rallying and motivating his severely outnumbered team throughout a day-long battle, he saved the lives of 21 soldiers and prevented his detachment's destruction while inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

The heroism of Brendan O'Connor and his team in Afghanistan received national media attention on the CBS News program "60 Minutes," which aired a segment on April 20 of this year, "Ambush in Afghanistan."

Brendan O'Connor comes from a long and distinguished family history of military service to our Nation, with deep roots in the U.S. Army and at West Point. Brendan's father, LTC Mortimer O'Connor, who graduated from West Point in 1953, was killed in action in Vietnam in 1968 while leading men into battle as commander of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry, in the famed "Big Red One," the oldest continuously serving division in the U.S. Army.

A true "warrior-poet", Mort O'Connor was not only decorated several times for valor on the battlefield, but taught English at West Point and earned a graduate degree in English literature from the University of Pennsylvania. A remembrance of Mort O'Connor in a March 1978 West Point Alumni publication recalled his spirit on the athletic fields as a young cadet:

When victorious he would exultantly claim to be descended from ancient Irish warrior kings. And it may be true, for he had in him a wild romanticism, a tragic lilt of heart, which only the Irish have.